

BOOK I

The First Book: On Orlando Innamorato*:
Containing the Various Adventures and the Cause of
His Falling in Love, Translated from the
True Chronicle of Turpin,
Archbishop of Reims, by His Excellency
Count Matteo Maria Boiardo,
Count of Scandiano, for the Illustrious
Lord Ercole, Duke of Ferrara

Canto i

Angelica in Paris

Gradasso envies Rinaldo's horse and Orlando's sword. The story turns to Charlemagne's Pentecost tournament. Angelica appears. Orlando and others fall in love and are eager to accept her challenge, not knowing her brother's spear is enchanted. Malagise learns her true motive. Astolfo wins a lottery but is defeated by Argalia. Feraguto refuses to play by the rules.

1. You who assemble*—lords and knights—
to hear things new, things of delight,
be still, attentive, listen to
the rare events that prompt my song;
you shall hear deeds no man can measure,
stupendous feats, amazing labors
Love caused Orlando to perform
when Charlemagne was emperor.
2. Don't think it strange, my lords, to hear
Orlando *innamorato* sung.
It always is the proudest man
whom Love defeats and subjugates.
No strong arm, no audacity,
no blade well-honed, no shield or mail,
no other power can avail,
for in the end Love conquers all.
3. Few people know this story, since
its teller—Turpin—kept it hid.
He may have feared that his account
seemed disrespectful to the Count,
for he whom Love defeated had
withstood all else, except for that—
I mean Orlando, baron bold!
Now let us hear the tale as told.
4. Turpin's true history recounts
that reigning in the Orient
past India was a mighty king
so powerful in wealth and state
and so impressive in his strength
he held the world of no account.
That dragon-hearted sovereign
was named Gradasso. He was giant.

ANGELICA IN PARIS

5. And as it happens to great lords
who only want what they can't have,
the greater obstacles there are
to reaching what they would obtain
the more they jeopardize their realms,
and what they want, they cannot gain.*
Thus that bold pagan only craved
sharp Durindan and swift Baiardo.
6. From everywhere in his large kingdom
he made men gather to bear weapons,
for he knew well no wealth of his
could purchase either sword or steed.
Their owners were two merchants who
sell their commodities too dear.
Therefore, he planned to go to France
and capture them with his great strength.
7. One hundred-fifty thousand knights
out of his multitudes he chose
but did not plan on using them;
instead, he sought to duel alone
against King Charles and his troops—those
believers in our holy faith.
Alone he'd conquer and destroy
all the sun sees, all sea surrounds.
8. For now, we leave them under sail—
you will hear plenty when they land.
Onward to France, where Charles the Great
reviewed and counted noble knights,
and every Christian prince, each lord
and duke, displayed himself to him
to take part in a tournament
the king had planned for Pentecost.
9. All of the paladins came to court
to celebrate that holiday.
From every region, every nation,
numberless people entered Paris,
and there were many Saracens,
because court royal was proclaimed:
anyone not an apostate
or renegade was promised safety.
10. This feast brought many men from Spain
to Paris with their noble lords.
Grandonio, with his serpent face,
and Feragu, with falcon eyes;
King Balugant (King Charles's kin),
and Isolier with Serpentin.
Other great men were there—and when
they're at the joust, I'll tell of them.
11. Through Paris drums and trumpets played,
bells tolled and instruments resounded.
Great paramented steeds appeared
with stately trappings, rare and strange;
their gold and jeweled ornaments
defy the power of human speech.
To show the emperor respect,
each knight was most extravagant.
12. The day drew near—that day on which
the titan tournament began,
when, in his royal garb, King Charles
invited to his table each
baron and knight of noble birth
who came to grace his revelries.
He numbered, at the banquet's seats,
twenty-two thousand thirty men.

BOOK I · CANTO i

13. King Charlemagne, with radiant face,
settled himself among the peers
on a gold throne at his Round Table.
In front of him were Saracens
who had no need of bench or couch;
instead, they lay full length like hounds
on carpets, as they always do,
scorning the customs Frenchmen use.
14. The book relates that banquet boards
had been arranged to left and right.
Crowned heads sat at the first—the Breton,
the Lombard, and the English monarchs,
greatly renowned through Christendom:
Salamon, Desider, Otone—
and other Christian kings joined them
according to their eminence.
15. The second table held marquis
and dukes; the third, counts, cavaliers.
Maganza's men were honored much,
and Gano of Pontieri most.
Rinaldo's eyes were lit with flames
because those traitors, with proud airs,
mocked him and laughed among themselves:
his clothes were not as rich as theirs!
16. He hid his burning thoughts inside
while offering a face that smiled,
and he said to himself, "You rascals,
if you're found in the square tomorrow,
I'll see how solidly you're saddled!
Infernal family! Damned clan!
If my heart's true, I hope my lance
will lay to earth each one of you."
17. King Balugant, who watched his face
and practically divined his thoughts,
sent his interpreter to ask
if honor, in this emperor's court,
was won by prowess or by wealth.
He, Balugant, a foreigner
and ignorant of Christian customs,
would honor men as they deserved.
18. Rinaldo laughed; his face showed cheer:
"Report," he told the messenger,
"to Balugant, if he would like
to venerate the Christians, that
whores in bed and, at dinner, gluttons
most often get endearments from us,
but when our valor is on view,
let each receive the honor due!"
19. While they conversed in such a fashion,
musicians circled through the hall.
Next there appeared large, golden platters
laden with succulent delights.
King Charlemagne sent every baron
a subtly worked, enameled goblet
to honor various deeds they'd done
and show that he remembered them.
20. Everyone settled happily
and spoke in soft, well-chosen words.
King Charles, who basked amid his nobles,
many kings, dukes, and valiant knights,
scorned all the pagan populace
as ocean sands before the winds.
But there appeared a prodigy
that left him—with the rest—amazed.

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21. They saw far down the splendid hall
four fearsome and enormous giants
enter, a lady in their midst,
escorted by a single knight.
She seemed to be the morning star,
the lily and the garden rose.
In short, to tell the truth of her,
never was so much beauty seen.
22. And in that hall was Galerana,
and Alda, Count Orlando's wife,
Clarice, and lovely Ermelina,
and others whom I won't recount,
each beautiful, each virtue's fount.
I say that each seemed beautiful
before that flower reached the hall
to take the beauty prize from all.
23. Each nobleman and Christian prince
turned his regard in her direction.
None of the Saracens remained
on carpets. They were thunderstruck,
vanquished, and they approached the woman.
She, radiant and with a smile
to make a heart of stone feel love,
began as follows, speaking softly:
24. "Your virtues, lord magnanimous,
and your bold barons' boundless deeds,
which are renowned in every land
as far as seas and shores extend,
lead me to hope the hardships of
two pilgrims are not wasted. We
have journeyed from the ends of earth
to honor your festivities.
25. "Allow me to reveal to you,
in a few words, the circumstance
that led us to your royal feast.
This is Uberto dal Leone,*
famed for his noble birth and deeds,
chased from his realm against all rights.
And I was driven out with him—
I am Angelica, his sister.
26. "Two hundred days beyond the Don,*
there in the kingdom that we rule,
news of this tournament was brought
and we were told that this great court
of noble people would assemble.
We heard the prize for prowess is
not cities, gems, or wealth, but that
the victor wins a crown of roses.
27. "And so my brother set his mind
to demonstrate his prowess where
all of the finest knights are found,
to meet them in the lists by turns.
Baptized or pagan, you who want
to find him, come outside town to
where what's called Merlin's Stone stands in
the green field by the Pine Tree Fountain.
28. "However, there is one condition;
whoever wants to try must listen!
Once beaten from his saddle, none
may fight again for any reason.
He must submit and go to prison.
Yet one who can unhorse Uberto
will win, as his reward, my person.
My brother will recall his giants."

BOOK I · CANTO i

29. She finished speaking and she kneeled
in front of Charles to hear his answer.
Every man marveled and admired—
Orlando most, and he drew closer.
His heart was trembling, his face reddened,
but he kept hidden his desire.
He cast his eyes upon the ground,
for he was so ashamed, and thought,
30. “Ah, mad Orlando!”—in his heart—
“how you let longing lead you off!
Don’t you see sin entices you
and makes you disobey our God?
Where is my fortune guiding me?
I’m caught, and I can’t help myself!
I, whom the whole world could not tempt,
am conquered by an unarmed woman!
31. “I cannot from my heart displace
the sight of her—her sweet, bright face—
because I think I’ll die without her;
I think my soul will disappear.
Now neither strength nor courage helps
against the bridling force of Love.
Knowing’s no help, nor men’s advice.
I see what’s best. I pick what’s worst.”*
32. So—silently—that baron bold
lamented his new-found desire,
but old, white-haired Duke Namor felt
no less pain in his heart than he.
He trembled, he felt stunned and faint,
his face was white, his color drained,
but why speak further? All the barons,
and King Charles, were in love. They blazed.
33. Each stood immobile, stupefied,
and gazed at her with great delight,
but Feraguto, that rash youth,
reacted like a sparkling flame.
A good three times he started forward
to bear her off despite the giants
but checked that bad idea three times,
not to embarrass the emperor.
34. He shifted feet, he rubbed his head,
he had a hard time holding still.
Rinaldo also saw the woman
and his face flushed as red as flame.
But Malagise knew her type
and whispered softly, “Wicked witch!
After I’m done with you, you’ll wish
that you had never come to France!”
35. In a long speech, King Charles the Great
offered the damsel his response.
He spoke as long as possible.
He talked, he stared; he stared, he spoke;
he granted everything she wished.
He sealed each one of her requests
and swore his service on the Bible.
Then she, her brother, and giants left.
36. They had not ridden out of town
when Malagise read his tome.
To understand this matter well
he called four demons up from hell.
See how his mind was terrified!
See how he shook, by heavenly God!
He saw, as if before his eyes,
Charlemagne dead, his court destroyed.*

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37. He saw the lovely lady was
the daughter of King Galafrone.
She was deceitful, versed in tricks,
adept at every magic spell,
and she had travelled to our land
because that ancient, evil man
had sent her with his son, whose name
was not Uberto but Argalia.
38. Galafron gave his son a horse—
one blacker than a burned-out coal—
that ran with so much speed and so
much grace, it beat the wind—also
a crested helmet, shield, cuirass,
and sword, all made by magic spells,
but more important, a gold lance
of precious workmanship and wealth.
39. His father sent him with these arms
convinced he'd be invincible.
He gave him, too, a powerful ring
whose virtues were incredible.
Argalia never used that ring.
Held on the left side of his mouth,
it made a man invisible;
worn on his finger, it broke spells.
40. Above all else, he sent the fair
Angelica along with him
because her face invited love
and prompted noblemen to joust.
After enchantment conquered them,
these noble captives would be shipped
to that damned dog King Galafrone,
who wished them bound and in his prison.
41. So claimed the demon, who revealed
all of these facts to Malagise.
Let's leave him for Argalia now,
who had arrived at Merlin's Stone.
He raised a tent amid the field,
a marvel of embroidery,
and overcome by weariness
he set himself inside to rest.
42. Not far away Angelica
lay her blond head upon the grass
beneath the large pine by the spring,
four giants ever vigilant.
Asleep she seemed no human thing,
an angel, rather—heavenly.
Her finger wore her brother's ring
whose force you heard about before.
43. Conveyed by the demon, Malagise
approached in silence through the air.
He found the damsel unaware
as she lay on a bank of flowers,
attended by her four armed giants,
who stared about them, wide awake.
Then Malagise said, "You rabble,
I'll capture you without a battle!
44. "Your clubs and chains will be no use,
nor will your darts and twisted swords.
I'll punish you when you're asleep.
You will be killed like gelded sheep."
That wizard moved without delay;
he took his book and cast his spells
and had not turned a page before
the giants had been overcome.

BOOK I · CANTO i

45. When they were down, he neared the woman stealthily and drew forth his sword to slit her throat, but when he saw her close—so pretty!—he delayed. His spirit weltered back and forth. At last, he said, “Here’s what will happen: I’ll make her sleep by magic, then I’ll have her. I’ll indulge my passion.”
46. He lay his naked blade to earth and took his manual in hand. He read it all and shut it closed, but what’s the use? His spells don’t work against the raw power of her ring. Malagi, who was positive she’d sleep until he broke his spell, first seized then started kissing her.
47. The lady gave a piercing scream, “I’ve been abandoned! Misery!” The wizard was, of course, astounded to learn she was not sleeping soundly. She clenched him tightly in her arms and called Argalia, who’d been snoring. At last her brother woke and ran out of his tent—but left his lance.
48. As soon as he had taken in his sister with that model Christian, the novelty made his heart sink. He did not care to interfere at first, but when he had recovered, he grabbed a tree and aimed a blow, yelling, “You traitor, you will die, since you’ve disgraced my sister so!”
49. And she cried, “Brother, tie this wizard tightly before I let him go, because without the ring I wear you won’t be strong enough, I know!” And so her brother quickly ran to where a giant was asleep to wake him, but it was no use: the magic spell confounded him.
50. He tugged and shoved with all his strength, but when he knew his force was futile, he stripped chain from the giant’s mace, then turned around and hurried back. With difficulty, taking pains, he tied both Malagise’s arms and then his shoulders, legs, and neck. He shackled him from foot to head.
51. When she saw he was tightly tied, Angelica frisked Malagise and found his consecrated book, replete with circles, full of demons. Immediately she opened it and as she did, in no more time, its spirits filled air, sea, and land. Each clamored, “What is your command?”
52. She answered, “Take this captive to Cathay, to that great city bound by India and Tartary where Galafron, my father, rules. Present him there on my behalf—his capture is because of me—and say that now that he’s been seized, there’s no one else to bother me!”

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53. The instant that her words were done
away bold Malagi was flown,
presented to King Galafrone,
and locked inside a deep-sea stone.
Angelica then took his tome
and woke the giants from their slumber.
They lifted up their eyebrows, yawned,
and wondered what they'd undergone.
54. Meanwhile, as these events transpired,
in Paris tension mounted higher
because Orlando'd made it clear
that he would take the challenge first.
With this King Charles could not concur
and answered that it was not right.
The others—each thought he was best—
all wished to be the first to fight.
55. Orlando worried mightily
that someone else would win the lady,
since when her brother met defeat
she must be given to the victor.
He felt sure, confident he'd win—
he thought he had already won her—
but he was bothered by the wait
since hours feel like years to lovers.
56. This matter was discussed in open
counsel by all the royal court,
and when each person's thoughts were aired,
it was agreed and ratified
a lottery would settle things.
Whoever was the luckiest
would win the right of being first:
that man could go outside to joust.
57. Each paladin then had his name
inscribed upon a separate slip.
Each Christian lord, each Saracen
threw his name in a golden urn,
and then a little boy stepped forth
to pick the tickets one by one.
He grabbed the first without a thought.
It named the English duke—Astolfo.
58. Drawn after him was Feraguto,
Rinaldo third, Dudone fourth,
Grandonio, that huge giant, next,
and Belengier before Ottone.
King Charles the Great came after these,
but let me keep this story trim:
thirty were drawn before Orlando.
I won't say how that tortured him.
59. The day was sloping down toward night
before the drawing was complete.
Then, his hopes soaring, Duke Astolfo
called for his arms—he showed no fear.
Although night fell and heaven darkened,
he said, as daring men will do,
the battle would be finished soon.
One stroke would make Uberto swoon.
60. Astolfo, you should know, my lords,
was English, handsome past compare,
very rich, but more courteous,
his clothes as charming as his air.
His strength was not as clear to me,
for often he fell off his steed,
but when he did, he'd blame bad luck
and fearlessly return to fall.

BOOK I · CANTO i

61. Back to the story. He was dressed
in armor worth a treasure chest,
his shield encircled by large pearls,
and he wore mail of solid gold.
His helmet was more costly yet,
due to a gem set in its work
that was, if Turpin does not lie,
a ruby of a walnut's size.
62. On his horse cloaked in leopard skin
with furnishings of fine-spun gold
Astolfo, fearing nothing, left,
and, unattended, took his way.
Daylight was short, and it was late
when he arrived at Merlin's Stone,
and as he did, the handsome knight
blew on his horn with all his might.
63. Argalia heard the horn and rose
(he had been sleeping by the fountain),
put on his armaments at once,
and bravely moved to meet Astolfo.
Nothing was missing, head to toe—
his armor and his horse were white,
his shield strapped on, the lance held tight
with which he'd tumbled many knights.
64. With courtesy, they each saluted,
and terms between them were renewed.
Angelica came out to them,
and then they drew a length apart.
Together, at one time, they turned
and ducked behind their shields, but when
Astolfo first was touched, his legs
flew where his helmet crest had been.
65. That duke lay sprawling on the sand.
He cried in disappointment: "Fortune,
for no cause you're my enemy!
Bad luck—a faulty saddle—caused this.
You can't say no! If I'd stayed on,
I would have won this lovely maiden!
I'm certain that you made me fall
to let this Saracen win honor!"
66. The giants seized Astolfo and
conducted him inside the tent.
Angelica observed his face
after his armor was removed,
and she was moved to sympathy
because he seemed so fair and frail;
therefore, she had him treated well—
as well as prisoners expect.
67. He stayed untied without a guard
around the fountain at his ease.
Angelica admired him
by moon light when she had the chance,
but when the night sky grew too dark,
she put him in a curtained bed,
and with Argalia and her giants
stood as a sentry by his tent.
68. The dawn showed little brightness when
everyone heard a horn so loud
it seemed that all the world would end
as Feraguto blew his challenge.
Creatures in the vicinity
fled from the thunder filled with terror.
Only Argalia had no fear,
jumped to his feet, and donned his gear.

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69. That bold youth quickly seized his magic
helmet and rushed to mount his steed.
His sword hung on his left, and he
had both the shield and lance he needed.
His Rabican showed no fatigue
but ran so lightly and so fast
that when his four hooves hit the sand
no prints remained, no tracks were seen.
70. Feragu waited with desire—
he, like all lovers, loathed delay—
and therefore when he saw Argalia,
he did not pause for conversation
but madly moved without saluting
to meet him with his lowered lance.
He would have sworn an oath he had
the lovely lady in his grasp.
71. But when he felt Argalia's spear,
shock paralyzed his face and heart;
he lost his vigor in an instant;
his vital spirits drained away;
he slammed the ground in so much pain
he could not tell the night from day,
yet his hot soul renewed its strength
as soon as he was stretched full length.
72. Their human nature, youth, or love
often make men belligerent,
and Feragu loved past belief
and he was young, so proud of heart
he was a terror to be near.
The slightest cause made him insist
on issuing a call to arms.
He was fast-tempered, quarrelsome.
73. Anger and shame uplifted him
as soon as he had fallen down.
Forgetting the agreed-to terms,
he readily prepared revenge.
He drew his sword. He stalked on foot.
He ground his teeth, and then Argalia
warned him, "You are my prisoner!
You have no right to fight with me!"
74. But Feraguto did not hear—
he recklessly kept coming near.
The giants in the meadow now
were fully armed and fully roused.
They let out such an awful shout
that thunder never was as loud.
I marvel what Turpin avows:
it shook the field two miles around.
75. Feragu heard and turned their way.
Do not believe he was afraid.
The first one, who was called Argesto,
the largest limbed, could not be measured.
Shaggy Lampordo was the next—
so called because of his thick pelt.
Men knew the third one as Urgano;
the fourth, all thirty feet, Turlone.
76. Lampordo's missile struck his thigh.
If not enchanted—and he was—
that bold knight would have surely died,
slain by that dart, the fight's first strike.
No leopard springs, no greyhound races,
no storm winds on the ocean gust
nor heaven's lightning fires as fast
as Feraguto took revenge.

BOOK I · CANTO i

77. He hit the giant lower right
and cut him like a soft cake through
the kidneys, stomach, and the groin.
One mighty stroke was not enough,
for now the other three attacked
and Feraguto swung again.
Only Argalia gave no trouble
but stood apart to watch the battle.
78. Then Feraguto vaulted up—
full twenty feet in air he jumped—
and struck Urgano's head so hard
he split him open to the teeth.
While he was busy doing this,
Argesto swung his iron mace
and hit behind his head so hard
blood poured from Feraguto's face.
79. This made him even fiercer yet,
for he was one who had no fear.
He brought that giant to the ground,
cleaved from the shoulders to the waist,
but he was not yet out of danger:
Turlone seized him from behind—
the giant's strength exceeded measure—
and quickly carried him away.
80. By force or fortune (I don't know)
the baron somehow freed himself.
The struggle then continued as
they each delivered one great blow
with greater force than you can know.
The giant had an iron club
and Feraguto his honed sword.
Each thought his enemy would die.
81. Neither one's sword or club hit air.
Turlone's iron impetus
had fractured Feraguto's casque
and thoroughly disarmed his head,
but Feraguto, aiming low,
had given an amazing blow
that severed with a single stroke
the giant's chain-mail covered legs.
82. The one half dead, the other dazed,
they dropped together to the field.
Argalia intervened and boldly
carried that baron to the spring
whose cooling waters gradually
restored his consciousness. He would
have brought that baron to his tent
but Feraguto would not yield.
83. "What's it to me if King Charles signed
a treaty with Angelica?
Am I perhaps his serf or slave
that I'm obliged by his decree?
I came to fight with you for love,
to win your sister in the field.
I want to have her or to die!"
This was what Feraguto cried.
84. Their argument awoke Astolfo.
He had been sleeping soundly, un-
disrupted by the giants' screams
that rattled the surrounding fields.
Seeing the knights discoursing, he
spoke gently, tried to intervene
and help the two find some agreement,
but Feraguto would not listen.

CHARLEMAGNE'S TOURNAMENT

85. Argalia said, "Now don't you see,
bold baron, that you are unarmed?
You think your helmet's on your head?
It's hacked to pieces in the field!
Look in your heart and then decide
whether you want to yield or die.
Our game will end in several strokes
if you fight with your head exposed!"
86. Feragu said, "It gives me heart
to have the honor of this duel.
Who needs a helmet, mail, or shield?
I would attack you in the nude
to win the woman whom I seek!"
Such were the amorous baron's words,
since Love ignited such desire
for her, he would have jumped through fire.
87. Argalia felt insulted that
this man so disrespected him
that he declared he'd duel him naked.
Neither the first nor second fall
had altered this man's arrogance;
instead, his pride climbed that much higher.
He said, "You've got an itch to fight;"
I'll scratch you, since you need it, knight!
88. "Get on your horse and do your best;
I'll treat you just as you deserve,
but do not hope that I'll hold back
because I see your head unarmed.
You're looking for a bad day. I
think you'll believe that you have found it!
Act bravely, since you have to die!
Defend to what extent you're able!
89. Feragu laughed at him, as if
he judged his words of no account.
Without a pause, he gained his horse
and shouted, "Listen, noble knight!
Give me your sister, as you should,
and I won't hurt you, on my word.
I will not hide that, if you don't,
you'll join those in the other world!"
90. Argalia, overcome by wrath
to hear so arrogant a speech
and mad with rage, climbed on his steed,
while blustering and threatening,
though nothing that he said was heard.
He spurred his horse, he drew his sword—
but he forgot his precious spear,
which he left leaning on a tree.
91. Both urged their chargers head to head.
as—furious—they waved their swords.
No earthly baron was so bold
that those two could not equal him—
neither Orlando nor Rinaldo
had an advantage over them—
and you will hear a fine duel in
the next song, if you come again.

Canto ii

Charlemagne's Tournament

Angelica returns to India. The Spanish pagans Serpentino and Grandonio win the Paris tournament as the older generation of French knights are defeated. Astolfo, known for his wealth but not his prowess, volunteers to uphold the honor of the Christians.